baltfood

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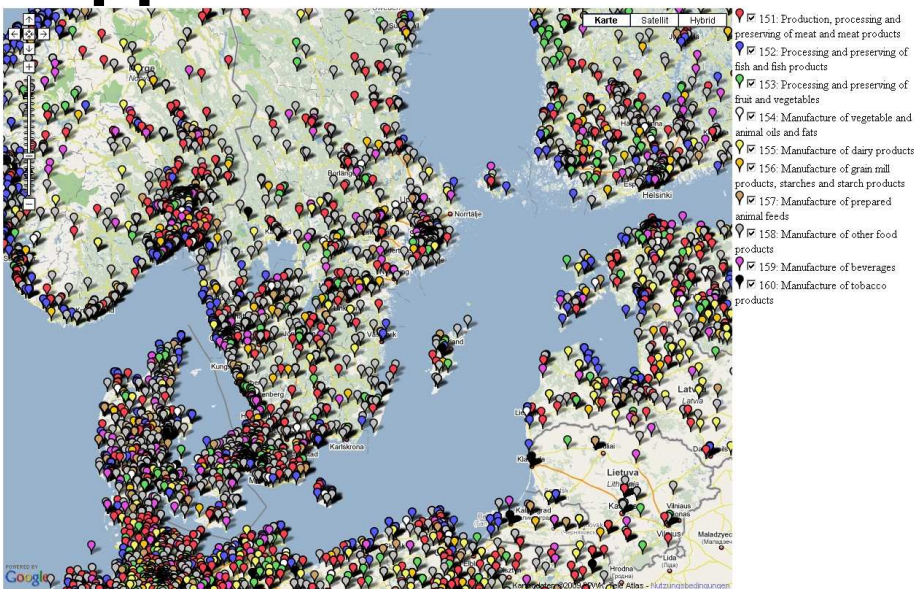
Analysis of food industry support structures



How do food-clusters work? What services do they offer? What support functions do they provide? To implement best practices of support structures in the Baltic Sea region (BSR) six food clusters from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania and Poland were given questionnaires in order to compare and evaluate their services and support functions. The aim was to compare the clusters activities by regarding their answers in the field of support structures, finance, typology, potentials, goals challenges, services, etc.

The questionnaire covers three main areas:

1. Cluster structure
2. Cluster management and added values provided
3. Output from every cluster/network

On the one hand it was found out that the clusters/networks bear resemblance to each other. However on the other hand many differences appear.

The current number of cluster members varies from 18 to 83, an obviously wide range. One to seventeen research & development (R&D) institutions are members of certain food clusters. There are also differences concerning the clusters/networks field of activity. They either have a regional, national or international focus. Education and training as a service spectrum is offered by all clusters. Considering the ongoing demographic change this is a top-ranking theme. Depending on the cluster's/network's strategy their service portfolio ranges from just one support function to several options.

These differences are of greatest importance and the fundamental basis for the conclusions of this evaluation. The outcome of this field study will be a "Guideline Manual for Implementation of Best Practices in BSR Food Structures".

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Ongoing baltfood project activities

The term "cluster" is used in several fields of activities from Biology to Music. Within the Economic Science "cluster" describes a phenomenon that everybody knows: The regional agglomeration of enterprises and other organizations, which are connected by a joint field of activity. Within a cluster all partners benefit from synergy effects.

Food-clusters in the Baltic Sea region are also the main topic of our newsletter. How do they work? What are the differences/similarities? Read more about this subject ***on this page****.*

How can R&D institutions get to know each other and their services? How can small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) benefit from their support functions? For detailed information read ***page 2****.*

The unique establishment of a Baltic Food R&D network will support transnational evaluation of food products within the Baltic Sea region. For detailed information read ***page 3****.*

The Development of a new jam generation on ***page 4*** *- "Beauvais"*

We wish you a good reading!

Establishing the Baltic Sea region food cluster

The food industry in the Baltic Sea region has developed into one of the strongest business sectors and it is famous throughout Europe and the world.

Some samples

This competitive position has to be assured in the dynamic, fast changing but relatively mature regional market. Concurrently, emerging trends require constant search for lower costs, innovations and flexible processes. This calls for both process and product innovations to be jointly nurtured and diffused by the scientific and business communities, hand in hand with public institutions shaping the economic development framework.

Research institutions conducting food research lay ground for product and process innovations within the food industry. Although many success stories on joint efforts between science, business and public institutions exist at the regional level, it is commonly acknowledged that the potential the research institutions possess is not fully taken advantage of the SME sector. The most common obstacle in utilizing research expertise is clearly the lack of knowledge about cooperation possibilities and contact persons. The question is, how do SMEs and R&D institutions get to know about each other and what specific knowledge and equipment do the R&D institutions offer?

To gather food processing enterprises and independently working food R&D institutions under the same umbrella the baltfood project started with a survey on food R&D institutions in the Baltic Sea region. By this overview the baltfood partners' intention was to identify all expertise and facilities of food research institutions which are regionally available for the food processing enterprises.

Based on this survey a first R&D questionnaire was developed and sent to the several research facilities throughout the Baltic Sea Region. 24 institutions replied to these questions covering general information about the institutions, information on pilot-scale food production facilities and information on sensory evaluation facilities. To receive a more detailed and better overview 11 laboratories were interviewed personally.

As the first questionnaire included more general information, a second questionnaire – divided into two parts: sensory evaluation facilities and pilot-scale instrumentation – was developed and again sent to the laboratories.

In order to establish the Baltic Food R&D network on a sustainable basis a business plan was developed. The business plan is used as the framework for the investment in the infrastructure of the network and covers the following topics: services to be offered, personnel resources required to operate the service, specific market to be addressed and possible competition, marketing and sales approach, financial planning, possible alternative routes to be followed.

The business plan is the basis for the development and implementation of an ICT-based support tool, tentatively named "Baltic Food R&D Network".

To offer the institutes the opportunity to get to know each other, their services and to introduce themselves a R&D network conference will be organized by the Lübeck University of Applied Sciences in May 2011.

R&D laboratory in Lithuania

The baltfood academy opened its virtual doors!

The first e-learning course ***"Healthy to Go – Food Innovation"*** was attended by 60 participants around the Baltic Sea region in 2010.

A **second course** will be offered **from 15. March 2011 to 19 April 2011.**

We asked Paul Lipecki, 26 years old, project coordinator R&D from H. J. Brüggen KG, about his e-learning experience.

What expectations did the participants have in advance?
The participants wanted to obtain new interesting contacts and like to immerse oneself in different fields of the food industry.

Did the course meet your expectations? Yes, of course. I got to know a lot of interesting people from different companies on the Internet and we exchanged our opinions with regards to very interesting topics.

What you did you learn then?
Mainly that you could eat healthier than you expect. A healthier nutrition is much easier to realize than it seems to be.

Which part of the curriculum did you enjoy most?
The interactive tasks and learning videos and the fact that the course was offered in English language. That was a good language exercise.

Would you recommend this course?
Definitely!

Thank you very much Paul!

More Information:
http://www.oncampus.de/food

Support transnational evaluation of food products – Baltic Food R&D Network

The baltfood project takes - in the near future - over a pioneering task in view of the implementation of the Baltic Food R&D Network for the Baltic Sea region. It is planned to use the Baltic Food R&D Network as an exchange platform for region specific food testing. The idea behind this objective is that for example a Finnish company intending to launch a new product in the Lithuanian, Polish and German market will be offered a single point of contact (Baltic Food R&D Network) for contracting its product testing (like sensory testing) in three different markets. Thus, the Baltic Food R&D Network will include product testing / sensory labs in each of the Baltic Sea region states. These facilities should be able to deliver standardized and quality assured results. The target group for this service are food processing enterprises.

Furthermore it is planned to use the Baltic Food R&D Network to built up shared resources in pilot-scale labs. Specialized pilot-scale labs will be linked, offering services for the food processing industry in the Baltic Sea region. Individual specialized labs will be capable to offer a much wider range of services by using resources from partners' labs in the Baltic Food R&D Network. The ICT-tool will support the process of cooperation between the labs (from finding the "right" partner / sources up to managing a joint project). The target groups for these services are labs which have an interest to offer a wider service portfolio to their customers without having to invest into own equipment.

Some technical facts: The Baltic Food R&D Network includes 1) a website, 2) a pilot-scale labs database and 3) a sensory analysis labs database.

The website will be maintained by the baltfood project members through a content management system, password-protected with regard to access to certain pages of the website and in English language (further languages to be foreseen).

Both databases will be fully integrated into the webpage and a secured data exchange among the partners using the Baltic Food R&D Network will be ensured. The information presented in the databases consists of:

1) *General information:*

   -The institution and its location;
   - The contact person;
   - International activities of the institution;
   - Experience of institutions in the collaboration with SMEs….

2) *Additional more detailed information:*

   <u>Pilot-scale laboratories database</u>
   - Technological process performed;
   - Name of equipment;
   - Model and short description of the construction;

   <u>Sensory analysis laboratories database</u>
   - Information about data statistical analysis: which statistical methods and programs are used;
   - Information about consumer testing: constant group or selected for the specific testing.

Resulting from the innovative character, the Baltic Food R&D Network represents the chance of a sustainable development of processes and products in the food industry and can become a forward-looking role model for the whole industry. The concept of baltfood and its transnational context goes along with worldwide globalization trends and indicates a modern and progressive way of international close collaboration.

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The 12 partners of the baltfood project

Denmark / Sweden

- Øresund Food,, Danish-Swedish Clustermanagement for the foodprocessing industry in the Øresund region

Germany

- Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg
- Lübeck University of Applied Sciences
- University of Rostock
- Lübeck Business Development Corporation

Finland

- Agropolis Ltd.
- Universität Turku, Food Finland Theme Group

Lithuania

- Lithuanian Cluster of food industry

Poland

- Lubelskie Voivodship, regional Clustermanagement Biofood
- University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, polish Cluster with focus on dairy industry

Sweden

- Skåne Food Innovation Network
- University of Lund, Lund International Food Studies

Contact:
baltfood
c/o Wirtschaftsförderung Lübeck
Falkenstraße 11, D-23564 Lübeck
Phone +49 (0) 451 70655-0
Fax +49 (0) 451 70655-20
E-Mail info@baltfood.org
www.baltfood.org

Interview with Jeanette Gottlieb Nielsen from Beauvais

One of Denmark´s oldest and best known food producers is Beauvais. For more than 160 years the company has delivered a wide range of food products to Danish consumers. The company has recently launched a new innovative jam that enjoys big success in Denmark. Øresund Food met up with Jeanette – development manager at Beauvais – to discuss innovation processes in traditional food companies and the way to achieve advantages through international collaboration.

>Degree in food technology
>12 years of work experience in food product development

What is the biggest challenge the product development department is facing in a traditional company like Beauvais?

The biggest challenge is to provide products that are not too complicated so that the consumers understand how to use them. It is important to stay updated on the trends, and then translate them into a product that the consumer wants. By making consumer surveys we often get a good insight of what they want and we can transform that information into a product. I think that new trends can also be applied to traditional food products, for example proper nutrition in meals, reduce salt, no additives and locally produced food. Even traditional products should be up to date.

Which of your new Beauvais products are you especially proud of?

That is the "*Cremet marmalade*" (Creamy jam) launched in August 2010. The product is unique but also quite simple. The marmalade market has over the last 3 years been downward in Denmark. After talking to consumers, we found out that one quarter of all consumers want a jam without the whole fruit and large berries and the jam should not glide off the bread! We use completely new pectin in the new jam product that has not previously been used in our classic range. The new pectin gives a certain texture that can hold the jam to the bread so when you apply it with a knife it does not slide. The product has now been on the market for about 4 months and it is a huge success (5% market share in Denmark). I am very proud!

How involved were your subcontractors and collaboration partners in the development of new products and the improvement of production processes?

We use our subcontractors and collaboration partners a lot. They are often specialists in their own small area and provide us a great amount of information and knowledge. Suppliers play a major role; we know most about the final product while the supplier is a specialist in a certain part of the production process.

Some of your collaboration partners are located around the Baltic Sea, how does the geographical and cultural closeness affect your choice of collaboration partners?

Many of the partners we fall back on in our innovation process are from Germany and Sweden. There is no distance problem, the supplier is always willing to come to us and we are very willing to visit their pilot plants. Collaboration partners from outside of Denmark often see both - the problem and solution- from another angle. This often leads to better solutions for the problems than only working with national partners.